

THE MOCKERS

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THE MOCKERS

AND OTHER VERSES



THE MOCKERS

AND OTHER VERSES

BY

JANE BARLOW

AUTHOR OF "IRISH IDYLLS," "IRISH NEIGHBOURS," ETC. ETC.

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ERRATUM

Page 48, for οἴχῳ read οἴκῳ

The Mockers

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*B3mσ

DEDICATION

Ἄλλὰ γὰρ νόστου πρόφασις γλυκεροῦ κώλυεν μεῖναι

*LONG time to look unseeing ever, and hearken
Even so, nor hear,
Makes bold despair indeed, heart's heart of fear,
While brood and darken
Wide wings of shadow and silence, whither sped
Down weary ways
Go joy-bereft, of hope uncomforted,
Our sad swift days.*

*What power yet past yon shadowy silent dread
Should pierce betraying
The secret of our doom? One gleam forth-rayng,
One soft word said;
For though but echoing faint, but phantom-frail,
Sound breathe, light shine,
From springs eterne of life that shall not fail
Comes thrilled the sign.*

*Nay here if now our baffled thought be holden
From seeking far,
About these paths, lo, flowers set star on star
In twilights golden;
And woodland waters leap, and music flows*

DEDICATION

*Through heavenly rift,
And crystal airs of dawn their rippling rose
O'er still meres drift.*

*But ye, who turned from many a gracious gift,
Earth's greeting kindly,
Nor stayed your quest, for eyes that gaze so blindly
The cloud to lift,
The dark rune read, whence blissful lore we learn
As they who roam
And see at last o'er wilds untrodden burn
Old lights of home,
Lost lights of love: O ye, who have crossed much daring
The dimness yonder,
Of comrades mindful yet who mourn and wander,
Speed, speed far-faring
The Sign, hope's shaft that cleaves the core of fear,
Winged soothsay, strong
To waken in our shadow shining clear,
In silence, song.*

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THE MOCKERS

I

QUARE and black and white it looks along by
the strand this day,
Wid the snow lit like foam on the foam, and
the sky's dark as dark on the say—
There's a little white gull sittin' out on it,
swimmin' and swimmin' away—
And the weeds all tossed up on the edge of
the wet like a layer of fire-scorched hay,
Turf-black through the froth and the flakes.
Faith, 'tis heaped up a won'erful height ;
You could tell by the same that the beach got
a great ould lambastin' last night
Wid the win' and the waves. Look ye yonder
they've tumbled a cartload of stones
From the ind of the Callaghans' bit of a boat-
slip, that nobody owns.

THE MOCKERS

But I see th' ould boat's lyin' there yet, right
enough, ne'er a hurt has she tuck—
She'd that hole in her ribs for this long while.
That's only the nathur of luck :
If it's good for a thraneen she was, she'd be
sunk the first blusther that blew,
But the storms let the likes of her rest, till
there's no better harm they can do.

II

That's another ould wreck up above there,
crouched under the rock in a cleft :
Just the eye-holes of windows and doors, and
the bones of the rafters is left.
'Twas the Callaghans' house, they that owned
the ould boat, but it's many a year
Since they quit, and the last folks they'll be,
sartin sure, will try housekeepin' here ;
For—the Saints be among us—a somethin' there
was at that doorway went in
Makes the sorrow a soul of us wishful a fut to
set through it agin.

THE MOCKERS

111

They were dacint poor men, the two Calla-
ghans, both of them, father and son,
Ould Dan and Young Dan, and his slip of a
lad ; there was niver a one
Had a word's breath agin them. 'Twas fishin'
they lived by, and fishin' ye might say
Just destroyed them. That's raison; for keepin'
on livin' 's the sartinest way
To your dyin' at last. Howane'er, they rowed
out wid their nets for a try,
The two Dans, on a day towards the winter,
mistrustin' the look of the sky,
And considerin' they'd take aught they could,
ere a storm riz upon them outright ;
So they left little Mick in the house there, and
said they'd be home afore night.

And they pulled out beyant Inish Cranagh,
but scarcely a fin did they take,
And the most that they had was a dab of a
brill, and a couple of hake,

THE MOCKERS

When they turned to run in: for they seen
out to say 'twas a ruffle of black,
Like a hin when she sets up her feathers on
ind wid the win' in her back,
And the Bay they well knew 'ud be rowlin'
around them, and thickenin' wid foam,
If they gave it a minyit. "Bedad," says Ould
Dan, "we'd been better at home
For what all we'll bring in, lad, this night."
Aye, true for him, and better indeed.
So they presently come where the low shelvin'
rocks is all welterin' wid weed,
And 'twas there they tuck somethin'—God help
them, the crathurs, they'd better ha' sted
To the world's ind at home, if 'twas starvin'
itself, aye, or under the tide drowndin' dead.

IV

Some misfort'nit poor lad of a sailor it was,
lyin' there on the wrack,
Where the waves, drainin' off, left him tossed,
and they thinkin', mayhap, to run back

THE MOCKERS

At the tide's turn, and steel him away, like a
cat when she's playin' around
Wid a wee little mouse she's half kilt, lettin'
on that it's lost and it's found,
Pouncin' after it. But, wirra, the len'th of
three days they'd been havin' their game
Wid the crathur adrift through the wild lone-
some says from wherever he came.

Well, Young Dan spied the bit of blue jacket,
lapt up in the weed that was spread
Like a net on the rocks; 'twas th' unluckiest
sight the two eyes in his head
Ever seen. So they laid him—what else could
they do?—in the bows of the boat,
For the last of his farin' by say, and they
covered the face wid a coat
From the rays that were reachin' their longest
far out of the west, red and low,
O'er the roll of the ridges; and home wid
them straightways they settled to row.
And the sorrow a word did the two of them
spake any more than the one

THE MOCKERS

That had said all he would : and a cloud riz
behind them and put out the sun,
Till the shadows slid after them, runnin' a race
wid the moan of the win' ;
And it's leppin' the say was, and droppin' the
darkness before they got in.

v

But they'd seen burnin' bright on the water
and brighter the light through their door,
You'd ha' thought 'twas a spark from the sun-
set blown into a nook on the shore ;
Ne'er a soul better plaised than themselves to
be comin' in reach of it all,
When they'd made the ould slip there, and
fastened the boat to the ring in the wall ;
And they legged it up over them sayweedy
tussocks wid fut and wid hand,
Like a couple of crabs clamberin' back to the
tide o'er a width of wet sand
In a hurry for 'fraid 'twould run out on them
fast. For the say and the sky

THE MOCKERS

Had got roarin' and whirlin' and driftin' together
afar and anigh,
Till the one thing sted still was the crathur
they'd left; but the place where he lay
Seemed the roost of the dark and the dread that
flew wild through the sky and the say.
So it's hot-fut each followed the blink of the
hearth wid the thought in his mind
'Twas the night and the storms and the cold
and the dead they were lavin' behind.

VI

And widin in their bit of a house you might
aisy forget all the like,
Though the win' howled as mad as a wolf, and
the black dark stood thick as a dyke.
For the firelight danced over it, round and
around like the shine of bright waves
When they blink at you up through the boughs,
where the sun's blown about in the laves;
And stars' blazes it lit in the delft on the wall,
and the supper things set,

THE MOCKERS

That poor Micky, the spalpeen, had waitin'
this great while, wid wishin' to get
To the ind of his long lonesome day. But it's
hungry they grew to behold
The big wheatenmeal cake, and their jar of the
crathur that keeps out the cold.
And they sat themselves down by the flare of
their hearth, wid their bit and their drink,
And the comfort drew out of their minds every
thought that was dreary to think.

VII

But Ould Dan, says he: "Musha, where's Mick?"
and Young Dan says: "I bid him to skyte
And fetch in th' ould oars out of her; safer
they'll be under cover this night;
Wid this win' drivin' flurries before it, the
waves 'ill come ridin' our strand
Like a hunt at a twenty-inch dyke, fit to sweep
o'er the breadth of the land.
Bottom up she belike might be floatin' 'gin
morn, or broke fine on the shore.

THE MOCKERS

He'll be back now," says Dan. And wid that
come the oar's butt-ind bumpin' the door,
And the gossoon ducked under it, liftin' it up,
and the most he could do,
Till he leaned it down slantin' along by the
wall ; and says he to the two :
"And who's he then at all you have lyin'
below in the bows of the boat ?
Fast asleep he is body and bones, wid the head
of him lapt in his coat.
So I told him the supper was ready widin, but
I'm doubtin' he heard
Through the blasts of the win' ; 'twas a great
shout I let, but himself never stirred.
Is it drinkin' he was ? He'd do right anyway
to wake up and git home,
For the storm's comin' fierce wid the tide ; out
to say's all a lather of foam.
He might safer go sleep in his coffin," says Mick,
"than the boat where she lies."

Sure the Divil's the same as ourselves : he
can't tell what he'll do till he tries ;

THE MOCKERS

And it's fairly surprised some odd whiles he
must be wid the folks that he finds
He can fool. Who'd ha' guessed the two Dans
'ud go take such a thought in their minds,
And they dacint poor men all the while? But
they let a coarse laugh at the lad,
And says Young Dan to him: "Was it drinkin'
you said? Ay, true for you, bedad—
Just a drop he's been takin' too much in a place
where there's drinkin' galore;
That's what ails him. But run you, and bid him
step in if he's wishful for more.
He'll be hard-set to hear you, for into his
dreams he's gone terrible deep;
Mind you wake him," says Dan; and "No fear,"
says the lad, "I'll not lave him asleep."

VIII

Ah now, what was it else save the Divil's own
trick put that plan in their head,
To be sendin' the innicent child after makin' a
mock of the Dead?

THE MOCKERS

And themselves that had often enough come as
nigh as the shore to the say
To ha' gone the same road, when a squall
caught them suddint out sailin' away,
Or they'd seem to be strokin' stone walls wid
a straw, rowin' home for their lives
Through the waves that the win' turned agin
themlike flocks that the Ould Fellow drives,
Till they scarce could believe in their luck,
when they'd left them rampagin' behind,
And got off wid the breath in their bodies, bone-
drenched, and half dazed, and half blind.
So themselves sittin' warm by the hearth, in
their own little house, safe and sound,
Might be sorry, you'd think, for the lad lyin'
cold in the dark dead and drowned,
Let alone risin' laughs on him. Och but 'twas
laughin' they'd raison to rue :
For a cruel bad job it was surely ; aye, in troth
'twas no thing to go do.

THE MOCKERS

IX

Howane'er Micky ran as they bid him, and
back he came peltin' as fast,
Wid his face shinin' wet, for the spray was like
handfuls of rain on the blast,
And the surf on the shingle roared behind him
hard by as he opened the door ;
So Ould Dan says : " Sure now you weren't long
over wakenin' him, Micky asthore.
What at all did he say then ? A notion we had
he was bothered or dumb."
And says Mick : " He said little enough ; ne'er
a word but just only : ' I'll come.' "

X

And wid that for a minyit the men saw the
thought growin' black in their eyes,
Starin' each at the other, and Young Dan roared
to Mick : " Arrah whist wid your lies !"
And the gossoon slunk back in the dark of the
corner afeared of his look,

THE MOCKERS

For no better or worser he knew. But the two
sinful crathurs were took
Wid a dread they'd no hole to be hidin' from
in, though their souls they'd ha' gave
To be findin' one. Aye, if the Divil himself
up and offered them lave
Through a chink of the door to his own place,
behind it they'd liefer ha' crep'
Than bide still where they were. Says a one of
them : " That was a step, man, a step
There outside on the shingle." And th' other
says : " Sorrow a sound did you hear
Save the say breakin' high on the rocks. Troth,
it's comin' unnathural near ;
But it's never a step. What was that though ?
Och Dan, what at all might you see ?
Somethin' dark there was went past the window."
" You fool, you, what else would it be
Only just some quare flicker of the firelight
that's glimpsin' there flapped on the pane
Like a shadow ? But hark you to that—Saints
above, how it's pourin' wid rain.

THE MOCKERS

For there's somethin' drip-drippin' outside."

"And what else would the thatch do but drip
In a shower? Else you'd say—Faith, the win's
got the door in a powerful grip,

'Twill be apt to blow in on us, rattlin' and
shakin'"—"Ochone, look you man,

Would the win' lift the latch? But it's liftin',
it's liftin' in somebody's han'."

Aye 'twas openin' the door was. They craved
for their boat, and she settlin' to sink.

For what come through it—Mercy betwixt us
and harm!—you'd be wise not to think.

XI

Well, next mornin', it happint, come two or
three lads passin' here on the shore,
And seen somethin' amiss wid the Callaghans'
place, and went up to the door;
But they found it flat-fallen, and the house-
floor streeled over wid wisps of wet wrack,
Like as if 'twas a share of the beach, and a
wave after just runnin' back.

THE MOCKERS

And the table stood set for the supper. They
said it 'ud turn your head white
To behold what was standin' up leanin' agin it.
God help them that night,
The poor souls, when they seen what they'd
brought wid their jeerin' and foolin' the child.
And Young Dan was crouched up in a corner,
clean daft, wid his eyes starin' wild,
And the sorrow a sinsible word, only screechin'
to keep it away.
But Ould Dan and poor Mick man nor mortal's
seen trace of by lan' or by say.

XII

'Twas Young Dan told the story. He's up
at the 'Sylum this ten or twelve year,
And the most of the time you might talk till
you're tired; he'll not see you nor hear,
But sit mopin' and lost. Only now and agin
it comes clear in his head,
And he'll tell you the whole, fit to freeze your
heart cold in its beatin' wid dread.

THE MOCKERS

Then mayhap the next minyit 'twill clever and
clean be slipped out of his mind,
Like the bubbles that break in their clouts of
white foam, and lave nothin' behind.

Sure it's luckier he is disremimberin' than
some that keep hold of their wit ;
For there's many a black trouble, God knows,
you'd go mad for the chance to forgit.

A FORESEER

I

AY, sure that was owld Owen MacDonnell you
seen, ma'am, himself that lives lone
Up above on Knockeevin; true for you, he
wouldn't come next you or nigh,
But take off wid him, scared like a hare, or
a crow that might happen to spy
Wid its eye-corner somebody standin' and
stoopin' to gather a stone.
'Tis this long while he's bidin' up yonder, and
raison and good raison why.

II

They be quare in themselves, them MacDon-
nells, unchancy and strange; I've heard said
Ne'er a sowl's after gettin' his death on our
Inish by land or by say,

A FORESEER

But among the MacDonnells was one could
ha' towld of it many a day
Ere the scraws were cut square on his grave,
or the wather closed over his head ;
For 'tis more than their neighbours they know
and they see in the times far away.
Folks there be that the same sort of sight
is a gift wid from father to son,
And from mother to daughter ; I mind all the
young ones was goin' in dread,
When meself was a girl, of owld Molly's black
cloak and her petticoat red ;
If we spied her along on the road, to the dykes
and the ditches we'd run.
'Tis herself that was grandfather's sister to
Owen, and thirty year dead,
But there's talk in it yet wid our folk of the
quare cruel turn Molly done
Agin Norah Gillespie.

III

Poor Norah was only a slip of a lass,
And as pretty as ever you'd wish to behowld,
the fine Sunday in Lent

A FORESEER

That herself and meself and Grace Farrell
was watchin' folk coming from Mass,
On the road there alongside the well, where
it runs by our goat's bit of grass,
And sure, sorra the atom of harm in the
world e'er a one of us meant,
But just lookin' and laughin' light-hearted;
when who should mis-happen to pass
Save old Molly MacDonnell, limped by wid
her stick, and her beads in a bag,
And she mutterin' away as she went. So says
Norah Gillespie to me,
Bein' strange in this place: "Och to goodness,"
says Norah, "and who, now, is she?"
But whoever it is, sure and sartin herself is
the ugly owld hag."

Well, ma'am, louder she spoke than she
thought, or the wind gave a lift to the word,
For it's round Molly turned on a suddint as
if she was called by her name,
And you couldn't misdoubt by the look of her
face that she'd heard what she'd heard;

A FORESEER

And then hobblin' back straight to the place where
we stood, still and frightened, she came,
Wid her eyes howldin' Norah, till only the
len'th of her short shadow lay
'Twixt them both. And says she : "Owld and
ugly, in troth 'tis meself is that same ;
But as ugly and owld as I am, and as young
and as bowld as you be,
Truth I tell you," says Molly, "the next time
the people are passin' this way,
'Tis the face of me, ugly and owld, they'll be
liker and liefer to see
Than your face."

And that week was scarce out
ere the girsheach was cowl'd in her clay.

IV

So small blame to us all if afeard we do be
of the folk that can pry
Round the corners ahead on the road we must
travel whate'er may befall,
And come scaldin' some poor crathur's heart
wid bad luck he'd ne'er think of at all

A FORESEER

Till it dropped wid a flash at his feet like a
fire-ball lit out of the sky;
And 'tis better than walkin' in grief, since you
know where the black shadows lie,
That your frettin' beforehand will stir from
your way when it stirs a stone wall.

v

But I'll tell you what happint that time
when owld Owen quit out of the town,
And took off to the shanty above on the hill.

'Twas a cowld winter's night
And I stepped round to see was it seven, for
but seldom our clock does be right,
At Nan Reilly's, that married me brother Pat
Doyne. So she bid me sit down
Till she'd wet us a cup of hot tay; and the
two of us there by the light
Of her fire in discoorse had the house to our-
selves, sorra foot on the floor,
Barrin' Dermot MacNeill, sittin' back of the
settle, and he splicin' an oar,

A FORESEER

Sister's son to Nan Reilly, and ever a dacint
lad, steady and quite ;
But that evenin' discouraged he seemed, in
a way, spakin' hardly a word
Bad or good. Well, ma'am, all of a suddint,
and faix but it gave us the fright,
Come a terrible knock on the door, like as
if some great weight of a bird
Druv agin it headforemost, and struck herself
dead in the midst of her flight ;
Yet no bird 'twas at all, for the voice there
of somebody callin' we heard :
Let me in ! let me in ! let me in ! like one frantic,
and rattlin' the latch,
Until Dermot, that lep' up to pull back the
cross-bar as quick as he might,
Flung the door open wide, and who else should
stand black 'twixt the snow and the thatch
Except Maureen Ni Meara, me cousin, that
people said hadn't her match
For a beauty in all of the Inishes? Ay, for
sure, thrimblin' and white,

A FORESEER

It was Maureen herself. And "Och Felix," says
she, grippin' Dermot's arm tight,
"I'm afeard." For at first, runnin' out of the
dark, in her flurry she thought
'Twas her bachelor Felix, the brother of Dermot;
but soon as she seen,
Like a lapwing she darted away from him
straight, and a howld of me caught,
And: "What scared you, alanna?" says Nan,
and says she: "Comin' up the boreen,
There was Owen MacDonnell, that called me
and beckoned, and bid me to wait,
So I run like the win', because well do I know
if he stopped me for aught,
'Twas some cruel misfortune he'd tell me he
knew of as sartin as fate,
That 'ud frighten me life out," says Maureen,
and wrapped up her head in her shawl
Agin hearin'. And "Whist," says Nan Reilly,
"child, dear, we'll be lettin' him call;
Sorra foot he'll set in it this night, and the
sorra bad fortune he'll tell—

A FORESEER

Draw the bolt," says she, "Dermot avic, in
God's name!" But her word was too late,
For that minyit she spoke it we seen the door
move, as we heard the hinge grate,
And the moon shinin' clear behind Owen him-
self where his black shadow fell.

VI

And a hand or a foot ne'er a one of us
stirred, standin' listenin' in dread,
Like as if some comether he put on us all
till we'd hear what he said;
Musha, better we knew than be biddin' him
whist wid that look in his eyes,
For as aisy you'd hinder the lightnin' of
burnin' its track through the skies.
And says he: "Listen, Maureen Ni Meara,
yourself there that's hidin' your head,
Sure I see you, I see you; I see where the
chapel looks down on the strand;
And 'tis up the boreen to the door, wid the
lad that's your groom at your side,

A FORESEER

You went by in the noon's light ; ay, Maureen
Ni Meara, I see you a bride,
But I'm thinkin' 'tis strange, truth I'm tellin'
you, scarcely the breadth of me hand
Is the shadow slid over the stone, and the
wave's rim crep' white up the sand,
And I see you, I see you—ah, Maureen Ni
Meara, a widow you tread
Wid your feet in the prints of the bride's feet
before you that passed in this sun,
Not the time since a lark would be singing its
song. Is his travellin' all done
That should walk to the last of his life wid
you? Sure then, sore-hearted he sped,
For if long be the days of the livin', 'tis lone
are the paths of the dead—
So I lave you to joy and to sorrow, soon
ended and sooner begun."

VII

And wid that round he turned where he stood
in the door, and went out of our sight.
But the voice of him scarcely was past, or the
shadow of him quit from the sill,

A FORESEER

When up started young Dermot MacNeill wid
the eyes in his head shinin' bright
As the wild eyes of Owen himself. And says
he: "Let him lave what he will.
Sure I met him but now down below in the
lane, and he goin' his lone,
So I gave him good-night, and says he to me:
'Night never blacker was known
Than the night I see darkenin' above you, to
fall on you sudden and soon,
When the sun climbs his height, and no breath's
on the blue, in the eye of the noon,
And you stretchin' a hand to lay howld of a
jewel you never may own—
Soon and sudden,' says he, and no more. But
God send every word of it true.

"For that bride left a widow what grief would
be lightin' on, Maureen aroon,
If meself was the lad gone to loss? Ay, mavour-
neen, 'tis little you'd rue;
Well I know in me heart to the ind of this
world I'll be nothin' to you.

A FORESEER

But there's glimpses and glimmers folk seek to
 console them when Heaven they miss,
And see, Maureen Ni Meara, me jewel, 'tis fine
 I'd contint me wid this.
For I'd count it the best of me luck, nought I'd
 grudge to be gettin' me death
Soon and sudden, if just till the Priest said his
 say I'd have lave to draw breath
By your side at the altar ; no time would I ask
 for a look or a kiss
Might be vexin' you, Maureen machree, ere I
 dropped at your feet, and the dark
From me eyes took the sight of you. Ay, but
 I'm thinkin' there's somethin' I'd keep ;
For the thought of that minyit I called you
 me wife 'ud burn on like a spark
Through the deepest of night, and 'twould
 light me to joy, as a dream in me sleep
Wid no endin' or wakin'. Mavourneen," says
 he, "if you'll have it but so,
No bad luck Owen towld you and me." And
 'twas wishful he watched till she'd spake.

A FORESEER

But sure, Maureen was mad wid him then ;
and says she : “ Be it bad luck or no,
'Tis the strange talk you have to me, Dermot
MacNeill, and you strangely mistake,
If it's break me hand-promise, you'd have me,
to Felix, that's truer than steel,
And go back on me word for your sake.
Whethen now I'd have little to do.
But mis-happen what may, wife of yours
would I never be, Dermot MacNeill,
For the time that the star blinkin' yonder was
shiverin' 'twixt red fire and blue,
That's the short while to reckon,” says she, “ but
I'd count it too long, for my part,
To be playin' the traitor and tellin' a lie.”

So he turned on his heel,
And away thro' the night he went, bitter and
bleak, wid that word in his heart.

VIII

Well and good, ma'am, not long after that,
in come Felix from Killerone Fair,

A FORESEER

Wid his talk of the bastes he was buyin' and
sellin', and what folk he met there,
And all manner of news. But the story we had
he passed off wid a laugh.

And says he: "Widdy Maureen, acuishla
machree, it is this, I suppose,

Poor owld Owen consaits in his mind to be
livin' as long as the crows,

So it's croakin' he keeps like themselves, and
We'll heed him as much. Sure the half

Of a hundred year off he was lookin' this night,
if me widdy you were ;

And the nearest sight ever he'll get," Felix says.

But that time we towld nought

About Dermot's quare raumuish ; laist said
soonest mended ; 'twas only, we thought,

Just some notion stirred up in his head, seein'
Maureen distressed wid the scare.

So it all died away in our minds as your
breath melts to nought on the air.

A FORESEER

IX

Well, the weddin' was fixed for that Shrove,
when the year took a leanin' towards spring;
And the day come wid never a speck on the
wather or sky to be found,
Save a lark singin' songs for divarsion, or may-
be a little gull's wing
Sittin' white on the smooth of the say, and we
startin' to sail o'er the Sound,
Three big boat-loads, wid Killerone Chapel
forenent us, that stands on its height
Lookin' down from the cliff to the harbour.
And flashin' around and around,
Like the footprints of crathurs we couldn't
behowld dancin' wild wid delight,
All the sun-sparkles blinked. And the whole
way across 'twas the great times we had,
Wid the bride and the groom sittin' aft, and
Mick Sullivan fiddlin' like mad
In the bows; and meself next the mother of
Felix, that thought ne'er was born

A FORESEER

In the width of the world man or mortal could
offer to aquil her lad,
Unless Dermot belike. The proud woman
she was. "But, sad pity," says she,
"'Tis of Maureen's poor mother that hadn't
the luck to be livin' this morn."

So we come to the harbour as plisant as
plisant, and what should we see
Save owld Owen MacDonnell himself sittin' low
by the steps where you land,
Like a little owld leprecaun perched on the
stones that were slithery wid wrack
At the pier-end. And there Maureen spied him,
and straightways was fear widenin' black
In her eyes. "Och I'm dreadin'," says she, "some
great harm there is plotted and planned
'Gin the two of us, Felix; for yonder he's
watchin' to see me come back
As he towld us that night." But says Dermot
MacNeill that was standin' anear :

A FORESEER

“Now step on wid yous all to the chapel,” says
he, “for behind yous I’ll stay
Till I have the owld miscreant persuaded to
roost out of that. And no fear,
Ne’er a chance will he get to be throublin’ the
wife of you, talkin’ this day
Of your bride and your widow. Speed off to
your weddin’; I’ll wait for you here,
When ’tis over and done,” so says he.

And the rest of us trooped up the lane,
That run straight ’twixt two high sandy banks,
glarin’ white in a glow to the door
Of the chapel, night-dark at its end. Sure
it seemed next to no time before
Out we stepped again, under the shine of the
sun, nigh too bright to see plain,
Every one of us laughin’ at Felix and Maureen,
and givin’ them joy,
And they walkin’ along man and wife, lookin’
nought but a girl and a boy.

A FORESEER

x

But what happint next minyit, that's more,
woman dear, than is clear in me mind :
For, if blazin' and burnin' and blastin' the
land, a great thunderbolt's flame
Swep' about and around you in wafts of de-
struction, and went as it came,
You'd misdoubt, when you looked, was the world
scorched coal-black or yourself gone stark
blind.
And 'twas that way it fell on us sudden, ere
ever we thought how it chanced.
Some one pounced like a kite from the big
boulder-stone he was lurkin' behind,
Wherethe two of them passed ; and, caught bright
in the sun, somethin' flickered and glanced ;
Then one choked in his shout, and dropped down ;
and one ran—and there Maureen stood still,
And 'twas Felix lay stabbed to the heart at her
feet, stretched the len'th of his grave,
Ne'er to stir till it took him. But headlong
his murderer raced over the hill,

A FORESEER

Wid some follyin' as fast; sure that day he
was bound to be havin' his will,
So they couldn't o'ertake or purvint him. And
down by the edge of the wave,
On the rocks at the cliff's foot, 'twas Dermot
MacNeill they got kilt on the strand,
Wid the blade he dhruv home to his own
brother's heart gripped death-fast in his
hand.

XI

Now a strange thing that happint I'll tell
you. When some of us, down by the slip,
Done our best to be loosin' his howld on the
haft, sorra one of us could ;
Not his mother, that tried in distraction, for
strong as a vice was his grip.
And the mother's owld mother of Maureen
come near us, and cursed where she stood,
And was sayin' to God that the knife might
keep ever the place it was in,
Till the Judgment, and Dermot rise up wid it
clutched for a sign of his sin

A FORESEER

And remembrance ; yet, troth, 'twould be
grabbed off him soon, and he strivin' below
Wid the divils in Hell. But Pat Doyne bid
her whist for the honour of God.

“Look you yonder,” says he ; and the blade,
sure enough, glittered flung on the sod ;
And 'twas quit of it Dermot MacNeill on the
last of his journeys should go,
For sure Maureen had drawn it soft out of
his hand—ay, the crathur did so.

XII

But it's sorry I was for owld Owen Mac-
Donnell, for mostly the folk
Did be blamin' it all on his seein' and tellin',
that brought trouble and harm ;
And they run from his road ; not a sowl would
set foot near his bit of a farm,
And they thought they'd be hearin' black news
of misfortune whenever he spoke.
Till at last, and it wasn't so long after that,
they'd the heart of him broke,

A FORESEER

And he took off to bide up above on
Knockeevin. So you may depind
'Twas himself you spied yonder, for over the
hill of a mornin' he strays
Gatherin' sticks. Och forlorn is the little owld
crathur, wid sorra a frind ;
And I'm thinkin' whate'er he'd behould if he
looked past his life's lonesome ind
Would be luckier than aught else he seen in
the len'th of his desolit days.

SUPPER IN THE BOREEN

(All Souls' Night, November 2)

THE edge of Autumn 'twas, when very drear
And lone and strange for her the great world
grew

One sudden morning, why, she hardly knew,
Being simpler than to see the reasons clear
That could not let her rest where many a year
Her days had lingered by, and barred the door
Fast of the little house against her, tried
In vain, for she must trespass there no more ;
As if another roof, now, far or near,
Was hers indeed, or any place to bide
On the wide earth's floor.

Howbeit away she wandered, lost, alone,
With never a wish in life her steps to guide
Down lanes that tangled through the country-
side,

SUPPER IN THE BOREEN

Where leaves even so were turned adrift and
 strown

On listless journeyings, and the bare fields,
 mown

Or reaped, lay still ; but hedgerows in the sun
Seemed studded thick with jewels, berry and nut,
She lacked the eyes to heed ; since sorrow had
 spun

A shrouding mist, till skies that clearest shone
Looked dim to her, thinking how the door
 was shut

And her good days done.

The lads and she had oft enough whilere
Gone gathering in the hedges high and low
On golden morns, when long and long ago
Young colleens laughed. Why should an old
 crone care

To grope for blackberries that none could share ?
And in their little houses folk were kind,
That would not say her nay if a crust of bread
Was with them : seldom need she peer half
 blind

SUPPER IN THE BOREEN

'Twixt frosted briars, content with sorry fare,
Since wizened fruit belated, sour and red
She could only find.

But when November's Eve the haunted night
Brought near, that bids across a threshold dire
Exiles of home, for whose return the fire
Is kindled, and by faithful hands in sight
The board left ready, grieved she was out-
right

That in their old hearth's glow she could not
set

The seat and spread the meal that memory
shows :

*Mayhap they'll be misdoubting I forget,
My grief! she sighed, or grudge the sod to light ;
When ne'er a one of them, a one, God knows,
But I'm mourning yet.*

Then after soon, a glimmering hope spied she
In that harm's self: for year by year had sped
Her All Souls' night, nor ever brought home
her Dead,

SUPPER IN THE BOREEN

That ever she watched with hungered heart
to see.

*For none of them made much, dear hearts, of me :
They scarce would travel back that far while
naught*

*I ailed ; but, ah, these times, she said, 'tis well
They know the way I am left, and like as aught
Noreen would come, or Mick. Though long it be,
If mother herself remembers—who can tell?—
She might have the thought.*

So through that gloaming, slow, with halting
feet,
She climbed the hill where winds the steep
boreen,
Deep-sunken and sheltered furze-shagged banks
between,
And at a half-door begged a sod of peat.
The woman of the house did blithely greet
This poor old woman of no house at all,
Who round the turn a stone's throw farther went
With thrice her asking 'neath her sleet-drenched
shawl,

SUPPER IN THE BOREEN

Till under writhen boughs that well nigh
meet

She found a hollow fit for her intent,
Where the bank stands tall.

Therein her three black sods aslant she
leant

And lit, and while the clear blue smoke un-
curled,

Her store outspread. Her one hope in the
world

So wrought her that in reckless wise she had
spent

In the town her hoarded pennies, wholly bent
Those guests to feast aright. Herself might fast,
But for the lads she had brought the speckled
cake.

'Twas the dull fire-blink, yet, please God,
'twould last

To light them back. They'd know her best
she meant;

And if they came, sure 'would be for the sake
Of the old times past.

SUPPER IN THE BOREEN

More oft than in the smoke a quick spark dies
Her hopes were quenched ; for ever a step she
heard

If wind or wing amongst the branches stirred,
And night's wide house seemed full of calls
and cries,

That crept to her from afar. But fear likewise
Kept watch, a phantom threatening other scathe
Than daily peril, against the feeble and old
Resurgent : fear it was lest all her faith
That any help could reach her 'neath these
skies

Must dwindle o'er the sill of dawning cold,
An evanished wraith.

Gript in their chill blasts, still with grudging
grief
She felt the dark hours wane toward morning-
tide,
When she must see her dreams had surely died
And left her desolate. That sole dread in
chief,
Prevailing, made her vigil all too brief,

SUPPER IN THE BOREEN

Because anon she heart-bereft should hear
The shrill cocks hailing back her weary day,
Of friends forlorn, forlorn of any cheer,
With goalless path again as fallen leaf ;
Fell summons that her cherished hope would
 slay,
And but change her fear. ,

WAYFARERS

ON yestereve a while in talk I stood
With Norah Doyne beside her shadowy door,
And saw dim twilight fiery rood on rood
Steal from the sunset's shore.
Wide swept the moorland brown, we watched
 it o'er,
To earth's up-tilting rim ; and if we turned
Eastward, again, low-glimmering on her floor
The red embers burned.

“ Aye,” said the banati, “ ’tis lonesome lies
This road of ours ; full often round and round
I look and see scarce emptier are the skies,
Clear of a cloud-breath found.
So seldom a foot goes by to market bound,
Or carrying sods, cut yonder past the furze,
’Twixt morn and morn, belike, no step will
 sound,
And ’tis shadow stirs.

WAYFARERS

“ ‘Troth, ’tis the black road : in the winter’s
cold,

When cruel blasts are keening by, or grey
Grows all the air with sleet, some neighbour
old

Happen will fare this way,
Feeble, and stooped, and slow ; and then the
day

Seems weary-long, because the winds that roam
Keep me heart-vexed, till I can reckon and
say :

Now the creature’s home.

“ But whiles a vagrant lad comes wander-
ing by,

That makes the lonesome place feel lonelier yet,
So sure I be no sun out of this sky
Shines where his heart is set :

And to the world’s end on his face the fret
Bides still. His bit and sup I grudge, God
knows,

As little as I his woeful look forget
When his way he goes.

WAYFARERS

“For save the drink of milk, and crust of
bread,
And kindly word, his share of life outright
Was lost on him, since all his care,” she said,
“Hidden was from his sight
In one dark house. And if at dusk grows
bright
Some door fast by, that watching folk unbar,
Aye farther from him seems its blink of
light
Than the evening star.”

There, as she spoke, I gazed, and doubting
spied
A sheeny mote, sunk deep in heaven's domed
roof,
Its phantom ray athwart the mist rose-dyed
Thrill, very faint, in proof
Of world from world immeasurably aloof:
A quivering thread o'er blank abysses cast,
Where Fate weaves on, with magic warp and
woof,
In the void and vast.

WAYFARERS

And yet, methought, those starry citadels
That front the shoreless Deep, with straiter
bands

Hold each to each than haply he who dwells
Yonder, and he who stands
Even at the door. Yea, though he warm
his hands,

Lingering a space as by his friend's hearth-fire,
None saith o'er what wild seas, in what strange
lands,

The flame were kindled to his soul's desire.

HOUSEKEEPING

“ἐν τ’ ἀπύρῳ οἶχῳ καὶ ἤθεσι λευγαλέοισιν.”

THIS sunsetting my thoughts, strayed to and
fro

Through our old house, enkindled saw anon
Its hearth-fire, brave with clearest flame aglow,
Fierce rose, and smoke-wreaths soft of cinna-
mon,

In sooth a goodly blaze ; but ah, it flares
Beyond a league-wide floor whose lonely snow
Chill blasts have strewn till many a heart
despairs,

Caught in the bitter torment of the frost
With fell accost.

For icy-keen the airs that creep and blow
Beneath yon roof, and sore their harm who
house

Within these vasty walls, yet helpless go

HOUSEKEEPING

Barred from the halls where happier guest-
mates drowse,
Lapt warm in hoarded sunbeams. Long their
grief
That hours folk shiver through pass wondrous
slow,
With never a dream to make their vigil
brief,
Nor any hope, save if some night forlorn
Should lead no morn.

And ill it is to watch profusion grow
In guarded chambers, neighboured nigh with
dearth,
Where wastrel thrift of stores that overflow
By strange misrule can make as nothing
worth
Our kindly harvest-wealth. For Greed and
Fear,
The wanton stewards thereof, grain-grudging
throw
Alms of their spoil; nay, though dire need
draw near,

HOUSEKEEPING

Nay, though wild eyes on blind eyes gaze
 adread,
That wept for bread.

But since this host it harboureth, pent in
 woe,
Pined for a crust and perished for a spark,
Nor ever a cure our wisest skill to know
Nor boldest dare: now would that void and
 stark
Stood all the accursed pile, with outrage rife
Of tyrant will on right and ruth, and so
Its haunts forbid the roaming wraith of Life
Vex not, with wakeful pain its peace to mar
While burns a star.

THE RADIANT FROST

MIST-PHANTOMS wove apace ere night-glooms
fled

Their elfin webs of rime, till purelier stoled
Than moon-blanced lilies, glistening fold on
fold,

Our frost-charmed wood beneath the dawn
rose-red

A splendour grew of spangled boughs dispread
And light-flushed glades, all dazzling to behold,
With gems besprent for dew, for dust clear gold,
From wizard treasures pearled and diamonded.

Methought: a voice among the undying Dead,
Who saw and sang, the enduring joy hath told
Of even such brief frail beauty. But instead
Came ruffling by a blast of north wind cold,
And wailed withal a word that Shelley said :
Alas, then, for the homeless beggar old !

A SPINNER'S DREAM

NORAH SHIEL, the neighbours say,
Lives, poor soul, as best she may,
And her little house is lone,
Silent grown so many a day.

Spinning now at eventide,
Sits her dusky door beside,
Fronting where a heathery crest
Frets the western clearness wide.

Round about her nothing stirs
Save the wheel that scarcely whirs
Louder than a wild bee hid
Questing mid the golden furze.

A SPINNER'S DREAM

Ill she brooks to let it run,
Lest her task too soon be done :
All her thoughts wax sorrowful
Since her wool is nearly spun.

Grieved she sees how few more strands
Bide for twisting ; understands
Well her morrow's weary part,
Heavy heart and idle hands.

Raising then a sad grey head
From those meagre hanks of thread,
Lo, across her listless eyes
Sheer surprise of radiance shed.

For above the purple height
One vast cloud its burning white,
Through the moteless skies adrift,
Hangs uplift to steep in light.

A SPINNER'S DREAM

Sheen as dawn-dewed lilies show
Doth the glistening fabric glow,
Blanched and bright in curve and crease,
Aye, a fleece of fire and snow.

Long her look the splendour draws
That her spirit overawes,
Gazing up the crystal air,
While her careful sorrows pause.

Yet she feels their fret begin
As she turns her door within :
*'Tis good luck were mine this eve
Had I leave the like to spin.*

Now may spells of slumber deft
Weave for her a magic weft,
All night through from memory steal
Empty wheel and hearth bereft :

A SPINNER'S DREAM

Reach to her no earthly gleam,
But such happy rays as beam
With a folding soft and deep,
Sleep on sleep and dream on dream.

THE DROWNED HARP

LONE is Glen Erna, lifted high,
Niched among mountain ramparts steep,
That guard few pastures green for sheep,
And one clear water, where the sky
Lets clouds sail by, or stranded lie,
Or drops adown night's stillness deep
From very far
The shining shadow of some star
A dream to be in its crystal sleep.

'Twixt crested crag and lapping shore
The clan bides, as their sires whilome
In stronghold kept and fortress home
Aloof from men ; for nevermore
Those cliff-walls hoar ope any door
To frustrate feet that thither roam,
Save only where

THE DROWNED HARP

One rude path climbs fast by the stair
A plunging cataract sweeps with foam.

There, when the winter's hush of snow,
Or raving storm-blasts fiercely cold,
Drove men to shelter as sheep to fold,
Drear waxed their days, twice captived so ;
Lag-foot and slow the hours did go,
Empty : nay, oft the burning gold
Of summer skies
Would leaden seem in listless eyes,
Since blank and barren its splendour rolled.

But once through mists curled blue as smoke
With fronded fire the hillside flared,
When o'er the pass a minstrel fared,
And therewithal great wonder woke
Among the folk, for 'neath his cloak
A small bright harp he bore, that dared
A wilder strain
Than wood-birds waken after rain,
Or stream-floods, storming through dusk calm-
aired.

THE DROWNED HARP

And all that winter's chilly dearth
He charmed away their roofs among,
Their dwellings his, and theirs his song.
Foregathering by the chief's wide hearth,
He made them mirth, while mourned the earth,
Frost-gripped, and no man deemed it long,
Such strange delight
Flowed with his music day and night,
To fleet their thoughts in a joyous throng.

Then, at an amber sunseting,
Softly the wind and water stirred,
And straight, as if a call he heard,
The minstrel spake : *The spring, the spring :*
Now to my King behoves me bring
The message many a day deferred.
With morn's rose-red
I go my way far hence, he said ;
And sudden sorrow ensued his word.

And, murmuring after fall of night
About the chief's hearth, angered men
Talked how ill days must come again,

THE DROWNED HARP

That lacked their singer. Quoth a wight :

*Darken his sight, or from him smite
A foot ; he bides our prisoner then ;
For lame or blind,
Methinks, a path would hardly find,
Straying and stumbling from forth the Glen.*

All pitiless, ne'er a voice gainsaid
That villainy, but every one
Fell plotting ; save the chief's young son,
Who heard their cruel threat dismayed,
And hastening bade the minstrel, laid
In happy sleep, that danger shun ;
Who from his dream
Rose, and stole up beside the stream,
In shadow shrouded or else undone.

But ere he felt the driven spray
Of the white fall, mischanced a chink
In rifted clouds let moonlight blink
Sheen on his harp, and so betray
By glimmering ray his secret way

THE DROWNED HARP

With deadly doom his lot to link ;
For on his track
Pursuers sped to hale him back
Along the perilous river-brink.

And there was wrought a deed of woe,
And there a fount of music marred,
When, wrestling more than life to guard,
Or yielding to a nobler foe,
The torrent flow that surged below,
Headlong to death down dashed the bard ;
And like a spark
Quenched in mad waves, that turbulent
dark
His harp bright-flashing a moment starred.

Now, when once more the mute glen thrilled
To breath of spring, with sunset flame
O'er the flushed water wafted came
Soft music, that the silence filled
With strains long stilled ; and sin's dread
chilled

THE DROWNED HARP

Black hearts remembering. *'Tis the same,*
The same harp's sound,
Deep at the hills' root sunk and drowned,
They whispered, stricken with fear and
shame.

Only the chief's son, crept anear,
Hearkened, and gazed with eyes grown wild
And wistful, even as who, exiled,
Meets speech of home. Said he: *How clear*
Across the mere his harp I hear.
That calls me. And when dawn-light smiled
Dim mists away
Where slumbering waters breathless lay,
To deeper sleep they had lulled the child.

And still, when past yon mountain-wall
Spring wakes, a harp at sunset glow
Cries; and the grieving clansfolk know
That on their best beloved of all
The fate doth fall to hear the call,

THE DROWNED HARP

And forth on trackless journey go
From hearts left lone.
Such bitter seed in sooth was sown
By greedy hands, that for joy reaped woe.

A CHOSEN JOY

THE yew that scarce would a black arm toss
For the moonlit wind by this lonesome mere,
Signs itself with the sign of the cross,
Like a scared old monk, when my shade falls
near.

Nay, should I tarry to blast and blight
The withering bough and its foliage sere,
While He speeds swift through the hush of
night
To tryst with his love by the silent mere?

What worth holds love? with the wealth of
hate
I have gained me a good I shall not lose,
Since here on a brink of joy I wait,
Leave won through its deepest my track to
choose.

A CHOSEN JOY

Thus choose I : she comes first to the tryst ;
Save her own quick breath she shall hear no
 stir,
As pale in the moonlight she stands to list.
Let be ; my soul's price is not paid for her.

For whom but one that three roods away
Shall be footing the heather up yon bare hill,
When down she drops in the cold clear ray,
That must lead him to her as white and still ?

For so, when the silence loudlier saith :
By that path went Hope ; follow, or bid farewell,
His life's wild leap toward the beckoning
 death
Must recoil at menace of horror's hell.

Nor wail breaks forth o'er his world struck
 drear,
As he moans dry-lipped : *On what vision dread*
Did these blank eyes darken ? What shape of fear
Flung open the gates whence the spirit fled ?

A CHOSEN JOY

Till despair speaks, spurning sense and
thought,

As he howls a name—can it mend his case?

Then comes my joy. Is it dearly bought,

If he look toward heaven, and behold—my
face?

AN ARRIVAL

Now haste thee, light thee down, thy doors
unbar,
Though slumber hold thine eyes, though rest
thy feet ;
A guest draws nigh, who comes from very
far,
And brings thee news, yea, tidings strange and
sweet.
Make open, hie thee forth his steps to meet—
I will not open, I, so late, too late ;
I am weary. One sole guest I fain could
greet,
And He will ask no leave, but enter straight.

Yet open swiftly, lest thou sorely rue ;
'Tis verily thy own most dear Desire,
For whom thou hast waited all the long days
through,

AN ARRIVAL

The slow, void days, in vain, and wouldst not
tire ;

For whom thy heart was storm, thy brain was
fire—

Alas, what sayest thou? Lo, thou couldst
not take

Upon thy lips a name of dole so dire,
Though rifest 'twere where Hell's wild echoes
wake.

And how, in sooth, thus churl-wise chide
him hence,

Who comes expectant of the banquet spread,
And rose-crowned chalice, soul-bliss thrilled
to sense,

But fares a friend with foeman's welcome sped,
Finding for song, a wail, for joyance, dread?

Tell him : *This house is ruin-rent and bare ;
Delight hath flown afar, and Youth is dead,
And Hope, thy bride, handfasted to Despair.*

BARRED

WITH lifted latch it stands ajar,
By April breaths 'tis shaken still,
Only a sunbeam slants to bar
Sweet Eileen's door against her will;
Yet shadows creep anear, afar,
And never a step has crossed the sill

Athwart its gold-gleam, brightlier bright,
What sudden glinting diamond slips?
'Twixt hovering flakes that drift and light
Like breeze-blown sails for elfin ships,
Oft through the cherry-bough foam-white
A twinkle of beaded crystal drips.

O'er dim green wood-roofs trailing float
Wan shower-webs dwindled as they fly:
A dewdrop's clearness in his note

BARRED

The merle has caught who sings fast by :
The softest step would hush his throat,
But ever his lilt rings loud and high.

Soon shall the earliest glimmering star
Prick down through ray-lorn airs and chill,
Where now no sunbeam bides to bar
Sweet Eileen's door against her will.
Then hope must flit afar, afar,
If never a step cross o'er the sill.

BEYOND ALL SHORES AND SEAS

LIES yet a well of wonder
All shores and seas beyond,
Where shines that dimness under,
More deep than in a dream,
Full many a diamond
With elfin gleam,

Glows up the glimmering water
Full many a ruby's fire :
If ever an earth-born daughter
Their wizard light behold,
She may no more desire
Our gems and gold.

Nay, some in sooth, who only
Adream thereon did gaze,
Thenceforth fare wandering lonely,

BEYOND ALL SHORES AND SEAS

And seek with sorrow vain
The glory of such rays
To find again.

Oft, oft, high-heavenward turning
The quivering stars have conned,
Or watched the wide west burning ;
Nor shall their hearts appease,
Whose hope lies hid beyond
All shores and seas.

THE ONLY TUNE

THE only tune that he could play—
He learned it long and long ago—
Was “Over the hills and far away.”
We young folk, listening day by day
As fared he, piping, to and fro,
The only tune that he could play,
Half-weary heard. Could none soothsay
How not till all life’s bravest show
Was over the hills and far away
Time’s hunter-years their chase would
 stay
Mid harried fields; and none might
 know
The only tune that he could play
For just a joyful summons, yea,
To journey where the path we’d go
Was over the hills and far away

THE ONLY TUNE

From worlds grown dreary. Ah, 'tis gay
Would sound one piper's call, if so
The only tune that he could play
Was "Over the hills and far away."

THE GOAL

SILENT and very swift on spiry round
Fares Time, thy charioteer, and dost thou blame
His silence and his swiftness? Yet indeed
If rein he drew to teach thee whither bound,
At the first word, perchance—at the first name—
Would'st check his tale to bid him speed and
speed.

THE ROSES' WISDOM

DREAMING, he saw her garden desolate
All lit with glory of roses : "Lo, the flowers
She loved," he thought, "have wiser hearts
than ours,

That mourn her reft away by changeless Fate ;
For these now of their bravery nought abate,
As wist they well how yet her blossomed
bowers

Shall greet her, yielded back by gracious powers
Some happy soon, whereon in joy they wait."

Then long he tarried, lest a step might stir
Soft on the listening paths, but hushed they lay
Till every rose was fled through petal-showers ;
And when the last were strewn, he sighed to
say :

"Ah, wise are ye, who knew the empty hours
Must lonely bide, save if ye follow Her."

A WHITE NIGHT

THIS live-long night in heart and brain set free
So loud a throng of bitter thoughts would
brawl,

Wild mourners feasting at the funeral
Of Hope in darksome grave laid fair to see,
That Sleep, life's dream of deeper rest to be,
Could hitherward no entrance find at all,
Because their clamour drowned her low soft
call,

Till frightened sore she far away did flee.

And now when dawn is nigh, their strife
grown less,

She back returning seeks admittance fain,
That I, full loth, must needs withhold, more wise
Than for so brief a respite's only gain
To dare the ambushed curse in Sorrow's eyes,
Forth leaping from an hour's forgetfulness.

IN HIGHER LATITUDES

“A FROST,” we say, “the stars such keen rays
wore

All night ; and now against a roughened pane
This dawn-light quivering beats with red-rose
stain,

And pearled till noontide lie the meadows hoar.”
Yet reckon the while of climes where toward
earth’s core

The fierce cold strikes a thrilling shaft, as fain
To daunt the centre’s fire, and all the plain
Is monstrous ice and snow for evermore.

Even so, this spell that half a night can keep
Our senses chilled, yet scarce outlingereth
The earliest beam, but while long shadows creep
Fades dream-like from the fields of thought
and breath,

We, journeying through a milder zone, call sleep,
Remembering still the arctic sleep of death.

A LAST LESSON

“'Αλλ' οἶμαι, ἔφη, ἔγωγε, ὦ Σώχρατες, ἔτι ἥλιον
εἶναι ἐπὶ τοῖς ὄρεσι καὶ οὐπω δεδυκέναι.”

THIS word, the last of all that granted were
Or ever the poison-frost began to creep
Heart-ward, our Master's wisdom bade us keep,
When one of us, grief-stricken, cried : “ Forbear,
Since yet the sun is on the mountains ”—prayer
He heard not, nor prolonged our time to weep
With lingering by the verge of that vast deep,
But drank, and ebbed from life as light from air.

And long shall mortals, bidden for bliss or
bane

To board of life, hear yet an echo say :

“ Who comes well pleased and parts hath
double gain :

If mirth swell high, that mirth nowise out-
stay,

Nor wear thy wreath till all its freshness wane,
But rise, ere darkness droop, and go thy way.”

THE SIBYL'S HANDFUL

'Tis strange to watch the young Ionian's hand
What time Apollôn schemes right godlike jest
Of witless boon vouchsafed. Such hopes attest
Rosed tips down-curved to where past jewelled
band

Veins dwindle ; fingers tense as though they
spanned

The world's worth in each grain their whiteness
pressed—

Each powdery spurt a heart-pang. Fortune blest
Saw she but half a life hence. So the sand
Would sprinkle to her feet, and all her cares
Change course ; for now the maid not soon
will cease

To ply that covetous palm with touches light
Of its fair twin, and join and often smite
Asunder, lest in some fine-graven crease
Lurk yet a decade's weariness unawares.

ISMÊNÊ

“ οἴμοι, τάλαινα, κάμπλάκω τοῦ σοῦ μόρου ; ”

MOST innocent daughter of a race accurst
Art thou, Ismênê, this thine only blame,
That when to thee the fateful summons came
With death's sheer menace fraught, thy soul
at first
Shrank fluttering like a frightened dove, nor durst
Confront the half-seen fear; so marred thy fame;
Yet when that fear grew fate, was bold to claim
Inalienable right to meet its worst.

For it was in sooth no craven heart that bore
The swift resolve : *Albeit alone she dared,*
Still not alone at least our sister dies ;
That shunned the deed, yet fain the doom had
shared—
Alas, then, must she see for evermore,
Antigonê, the scorn-light in thine eyes ?

OPPORTUNITY

IF this befell : At some fair dawning time,
Ere failed the wistful world its dreams and dew,
Sheer from the height of heaven reached down
to you

A cloud-piled stair more pure than glistening
rime,

And firm as marble wrought, in flights sublime
That pierced the void, whence lights come
faint and few,

Beyond all starry outposts : toward what new
Wild-wondered shores—ah, would you dare to
climb?

And if, while yet you doubted, lo, too late,
You saw it reft past range of fear and hope,
Caught up the vast, and here you needs must wait
Mere day's returning ; would not narrow scope
Wide earth yield ? yea, the azure's amplest cope
Enclose your spirit like a dungeon-grate ?

AN END IN ITSELF

ON brink of fierce-eyed morn and shadowless
way

I passed a spring brimmed pure as flower-clipt
dew,

Nor then durst pause or drink, but since I knew
My steps must thitherward turn at close of day,
I bade that loveliest image with me stay,
And evermore my desert journey through
From thought thereof my heart's best solace drew,
While yet the burning hours between us lay.

And when I stood thereby with weary feet,
Lo, trampling herd to baulk my dear desire
Had trod the limpid crystal into mire.
Yet how from henceforth chide the hope's deceit,
That cheered my path o'er leagues of drouth
and heat,
And slaked full many a shaft of noon-launched
fire?

OVER-REACHED

WHEN first, swift-forged, on thought and sense
and limb

The years their fetters laid, my heart grew cold.
“Strait dungeon-walls,” I deemed, “my life to
hold :

Lo, Fate’s dark face unveiled—and Gorgon grim.”
Hence, now that like frost-touches fade and dim
The head whose curls I stroked a twelvemonth
old,

And trace care’s track in lines drawn over-bold
On brows I knew while yet the moment’s rim
Did round the world they recked of: shall not
keys

Twice turn in guard of massier prison gate,
And feller eyes glare menace through the gloom?
Yet other shape the sequence seems to assume:
A cloud-pile reared and wrecked by breath of
breeze,

A shifted mask on unseen brows of Fate.

WASTE

HE who, bound on mortal's quest,
Wanders wistful-eyed,
Tastes not fortune's bitterest
In desire denied,
Till where rich boughs waste in sight
Goes he hungering,
Sighs he fettered whence deft flight
Witless finches wing.

Even as one that fares at noon
Faint in sun-smit ways,
Craving sore a moment's boon
Of cloud-stinted rays :
Whom the fierce airs' fiery deeps
Hold, nor once will free,
While the cliffs' cold shadow creeps
O'er a thankless sea.

SUNSHINE

WITH never a cloud from north to south,
The faint blue sky is bright and clear
As a mirror held to a dead man's mouth
Whilst one breathes quick for hope and fear.

All day the harvest fields lie blest
With goldening glow no mist-fleck mars :
All day a heart cries toward the west :
Come, night, but bring nor moon nor stars.

A SEED OF FIRE

GROWN dusk the lane where long shadows
drowse,
Blink fire-sparks twain 'twixt these hawthorn
boughs,
But one in heaven's great deep, and one
A dwelling hath in a little dark house.
For yon had shed ere our world was wrought
Beams bright and dread above man's dim
thought,
An ancient glory, a vast star-sun,
Through voids where atom-spanned earth is
naught.

And this poor ray by a lone wife lit,
Whose heart keeps aye a fond hope in it,
Was set but now at her window-pane
To throb and flicker till night-glooms flit ;
Lest haply her lad, who afar to roam

A SEED OF FIRE

Went loth and sad o'er the western foam,
By darkling pathways fare nigh, full fain
Her lamp she kindles to light him home.

She grieved shall wake to the dawn-grey skies,
For lost dream's sake, as her low flame dies :
The star's fierce surges may ebb or burn,
Unwatched, unwept for of mortal eyes.
That sterile splendour, Æonian pyre,
What doom shall end or what heart desire ?
The frail spark foldeth life's flower eterne,
A soul of love in its seed of fire.

ONE AND ALL

O'ER boundless fields of night, lo, near and far
Light, dewdrop's blink, and Light, Æonian star.
Wan wraiths that flickering roam by marish ways;
Fierce surge of levin-bright foam where oceans
blaze—

Fly's spark and flame gulfs dire, your fount is
one,
Deep in the worlds' arch-fire of all suns' Sun.

A burning seed of strife Fate strews, and so
Life, men's grudged dole, and Life, gods' feast
aglow.

Clod's captive, senses' thrall, oft grieved, soon
slain ;

Immortal, glad o'er all to range and reign—
Frail breath, and spirit eterne, beyond thought's
seeing

Ye touch for one sole bourne all being's Being.

RASH JUDGMENT

METHOUGHT I saw a mountain-wall upthrown,
Interminably confronting boundless space,
With tangled forest-belts about its base,
Wherethrough grave men toil vastly, each alone,
To cleave a little pathway of his own ;
And forthrights some, and some meanders trace,
But late or soon they end in every case
Blocked blankly by that monstrous bulk of
stone.

And this turns back thereon, and at his ease
Makes boast : *I leave behind all barriers ;*
And that smites head on rock, and when he
sees
Strange gleams before his eyes, anon avers
'Tis light from heaven. Quoth I : *What fools*
are these ?
Said one : *Dost thou call fools, Philosophers ?*

THE SORROWS OF SONG

I

FROM THE BUSH

THIS soothly is the maker's grief of old
And evermore : Thou hast seen one brier spray
High in the hedgerow deck a summer's day
With lovely light that wild-rose buds unfold
When half they hide their girdle of faëry gold
Fine wrought : worth well the halting by the way,
The baffled spring, mocked grasp, and long essay,
That here at last have given it to thine hold :

Yet show thee how or ever thou couldst
forbear

Thy strife with writhen stem and thorny sting,
Full many a pure frail petal unaware
Went fluttering earthward like a white moth-
wing,
And all the world might call the remnant fair—
Thou still wouldst mark and mourn each
empty ring.

THE SORROWS OF SONG

II

IN THE HAND

WHERE shadow and silence weave no spells in
vain,

There dreams and day-banned musings throng
at will,

Waxed bold and swift as wild birds if we spill
Athwart the frost-bound path a streak of grain :
So thou, long since for some rare fancy fain,
Might sing thee measured lays, through all
these still

Dim hours hast watched, intent thy grasp to fill
With such a prize ere morning stirred again.

And haply seeing how fast and thick they
came,

Ambushed, hast deemed the snare an easy feat,
Full soon to learn the fairest were the fleet :
This captive, fluttering till thine hand shall tame,
Is spoil thereof not that his song was sweet
Or plumage gay, but since his wing was lame.

A SONG AT SUNSETTING

*MORE fleet than flights of fire,
More soft than stealth of sleep,
Speed down abysses dire
'Twixt outpost stars that keep
Lone boundary lights ablaze,
While, meshed in spiry rings,
Suns weave their devious maze—
Even so my sweet merle sings.*

He furls his dusky wings
Beneath the ivy-hood
That o'er yon gate-arch clings,
As hill and field and wood,
Through pale mists hovering dim
Go lifted high and higher,
Up, up, with cup-curved rim
Against the West's rose fire.

A SONG AT SUNSETTING

*Speed swiftilier still and nigher ;
Nay, ere our veiled dawn slings
The disc of vermeil fire,
Breathe hither, O Spring of Springs,
Thy spell's enchanted might,
Whose sudden gramary brings
A change to strange delight—
'Tis so my sweet merle sings.*

Ah, list his soothsayings
Of joy unthought, untold,
Waked in all mortal things,
Till even the weary and old
Must deem they dream the truth,
And see their soul's desire,
Thrilled through anew with youth,
Whose shadow is dew and fire.

*Fled hate and wrath's fell fire,
Slain fear and sorrowing sore,
The very airs inspire
Love-lore and wonder-lore ;*

A SONG AT SUNSETTING

*A heaven no heart shall miss,
Where storm wild rapture flings,
And calm sheds balm of bliss—
Even so my sweet merle sings.*

A STRAYED PROPHET

FROM winter's edge to summer's sill,
This springtide through, I looked for you,
And listened morn and even, till
Too late at last the long days grew
For hearkening so ; now hope must go,
And no cuckoo.

Oh merle and mavis flute and trill
With much ado o'er nestlings new,
And tits and finches finely shrill ;
But every throat in all their crew
Might whist, if I should hear thereby
Your cry, cuckoo.

In seasons ere some evil will,
That harms ensue, mine hours did rue,
You would be calling, calling still,
A magic voice unseen, that flew,

A STRAYED PROPHET

And soothsay brought with marvels fraught,
Methought, cuckoo.

So sweet, so strange ; as if its thrill
On wild airs blew, that once did woo
Fair speech from high God-haunted hill,
Or secrets of the black doves' coo,
Where oaken shade old twilight made,
Betrayed, cuckoo.

Perchance you deem I take it ill,
And chide you too, that dead years strew,
Life's path, like leaves frore autumns kill,
Nor yet your oracles come true ;
But thus, indeed, you would my creed
Misread, cuckoo.

For 'neath yon skies, a-gloom and chill,
Or glowing blue, runs never a clue
To worlds that could your word fulfil ;

A STRAYED PROPHET

Enough if, echoing thence, you drew
From distant clime and dateless time
Your one charmed rime, toward happier
 prime
To chime, cuckoo.

A PREVENTED CURE

[Οὐδὲ γὰρ ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ ἴσασιν ὡς προσφιλεστερῶς
ἂν αὐτοῖς ἀπῆντησε Θάνατος Ἀποτρόπαιος ἢ
Θάνατος Παιών.]

FULL filled with one still ray, the village
street

At morn in summer's morningtide a wand
Of fiery gold down all its length did mete ;
But fast beside the murmurous water-way
Ran mingling shine with shadow ; for beyond
The river's path tall pine stems climb the
steep,
Past many a fresh green frond and foxglove
spray,
Ridged heights to crest, and there,
Crag-towers through clearest air
Uplift, and sheer cliff-bastions rooted deep,
Behold the vast mere-moated mountain-keep.

A PREVENTED CURE

Athwart that sunbeam's track a sudden flight
Flashed and was stayed. Young were his wings
and fleet,
And dappled faintly as if scarce touched with
light
Tangled 'mid boughs new-fledged and half-
unfurled
Small leaves ; but now against a glassy sheet
They dashed him, lured by crystal glittering ;
And fallen before my feet, to all his world
Blind, as filmed lids drooped grey
O'er quenched bright eyes, there lay
No song-thrush more, a lifeless, piteous thing,
Slain on the threshold of his summer's
spring.

A stingless death-bolt 'twas, that unaware
With never a pang smote darkness on his
day ;
Yet for the hours that should have risen so
fair,
And for their joyance, and their songs' dear
sake,

A PREVENTED CURE

Who but the chance would chide, and grudging
say

What long delight was lost in that swift
doom?

How many a drowsy lay how oft to wake

In dawn-flushed dells; to greet

How oft more dreamy-sweet

Hushed gloamings; wings how free o'er
heathery bloom

That now in all the woods must find no room.

A pitying hand smoothed soft the feathers
dim;

The goodwife spoke: *Poor thrush, these broad
panes cheat*

*The wild birds. Caged at home we have one like
him,*

*And whiles we'd shut all close, and let him go
To stretch his wings; but straight he'd fly and
beat*

*And flutter against the glass, till folk would fear
He'd break his heart on it in fury. So*

A PREVENTED CURE

*We durst not any more
Leave him an open door,
Lest harm some day should happen him, as here
This poor dead thing. We have kept him nigh
three year.*

ANALYSIS

THE seasons round their yearly ring
From June to June-tide twice she had seen,
The day that brought her visiting
My blossom-belted garden-green,
Where dew shines clear and thrushes sing.

For her an offering meet I chose
From flowers of rich and odorous garb :
Fragrant and softly flushed a rose,
Whose stem bore never a thorny barb,
Whereon the elfin hand might close.

Think not the gift with scorn was met,
Though eager fingers, swift and deft,
Each petal from the coronet
Of golden stamens plucked, nor left
A single plume to grace it set.

ANALYSIS

For one by one with dainty glee
She smelled them, ere they fluttered down,
Shell-curven wings, gem-hued, set free,
That should no more the fairy crown
Enfold of delicate filagree.

What though they needs must float away
On waft of breeze? 'Twas gentler doom
To pass undimmed as jewel's ray
Than drooping slow forget the bloom
Made joyance in a child's long day.

Still undefamed by hours that slur
With slanderous show of frail and fleet
All breathing beauty ; aye, for her
This rose was only red and sweet,
And who may to its praise demur ?

Haply if here were Paradise,
Skill had been mine to range aright
The strewn leaves in their olden wise,
Building anew the blossom bright
Till none should trace of harm surmise.

ANALYSIS

Yet there, perchance, to mend or mar
Were idle task of foolish thought,
Since changeless as a steadfast star
The flower that from us fades is wrought
Eternally in realms afar.

Nor more endures of loss or dole,
Though rent before our eyes it seem,
Than if faint breaths that near us stole
Made quiver upon the mirroring stream
Some crystal shadow of its soul.

EPIGRAMS FROM THE ROUMANIAN

I.—AN INDISCRETION

TOWARD a far goal my dearest Hope I sent,
But bade her show to none the path she went ;
So, when Despair did meet her on the way,
And asked her : *Whither bound?* she would
not say.

Then tell, fair maid, he prayed her, *whence thou art.*
And, ah, she told him, from mine inmost heart ;
And thither straight the envious Demon hied,
And there did enter in, and there abide.

II.—FEW AND FAR BETWEEN

No pleasure comes to us without alloy—
Perforce, friend ; how should else the stranger
Joy

Keep track, if Grief, that guest of every day,
Fared not with her as guide to show the way ?

EPIGRAMS FROM THE ROUMANIAN

III.—PROPULSION

'Tis very vainly, sure, that you entreat
This rare bright Hour to pass with tardier
feet :

She cannot choose but hasten : make appeals
To all those dark ones treading on her heels.

IV.—*ALITER ALIIS*

THE light of life, saith one,
Is the light of a sun ;
Death's mist a cloud hath spun ;
Let but cloud flee from sky—
Shows our shining aught dimmer ?

The light of life, one saith,
Is a taper's light ; death
A waft of breeze's breath ;
Let but breeze wander by—
Holdeth darkness a glimmer ?

EPIGRAMS FROM THE ROUMAMIAN

V.—ARGUMENTA AD HOMINES

THE Miser asked the Spendthrift why he hurled
His gold so recklessly about the world.

*That MY doubloons, he said, when all is done,
May have a thousand guards in place of one.*

The Spendthrift asked the Miser why he
stored
'Neath lock and key his still increasing hoard.
The Miser's answer was: *That, by my death,
I, too, may waste my fortune in a breath.*

VI.—BY THE WAY

WHERE one poor wight a climbing path
pursues,
There loiterers twain to stay his steps are
bent ;
Ill comrades both ; but let him rather choose
Black-browed Despair than smiling-lipped
Content.

EPIGRAMS FROM THE ROUMANIAN

VII.—THE MOMENT AND THE MAN

WHERE breathless night hung black, the world
 around
Lay waiting for the thunder's voice to sound ;
But first a lamp-lit traveller rode along
Swift on his wheel, and hummed a droning song,
So as he passed : *Lo there, how fierce a flash !*
Hark what a peal ! some cried with credence
 rash.

VIII.—A PRETEXT

As hungry beggars cry their want,
 That passers-by may hear and feed,
So my poor lays aloud I chant,
 For some kind Muse, perchance, to heed,
Who of her charity should grant
 The lyre, the skill, I sorely need.

“PORT AFTER STORMIE SEAS”

(From the Italian of Carlo Maggi)

THE wearied flesh, sad face and wan of chere,
The failing breath, and dimmer waxen eyne,
But tokens seeme that now I drawe anear
The haven from this mortall storm and tyne.
Swete solace of near reste do I divyne,
Who, if my keele have plowed no vastie sea,
In my brieft course mette muchell care and
 pyne—
Tho’ brieft, in soothe, crooked pathwaie ne’er
 mote be.

As one who longed-for shore at laste doth see,
With soft desyre of peace, and calmer thought,
Attunes his hearte to loved tranquillitie :
Soe I, who come forwearied, strife-o’er-
 wrought,
Furl sailes to youthly wanderings overpast :
Now land I sight, and now strike sparre and
 maste.

A COMPLEYNTE TO PITIE

(*From the German of I. Bauernfeld*)

WHAN that her litel child in erthe was leyde,
Wo was his moder more than eny wight,
Ful mochel sorwe and waymenting she made,
For ever in oon she wept whyl day was bryght,
And waked aye and wept the wery nyght;
Til sone ther cam and stood biside her bedde
The litel child, y-clad in deth-wede whyte,
Al wan of chere, and unto her he seyde :

*“ My liebe moder, cease as now to wepe
And leye thee doun, nor lenger weyle thy smerte
Sin, whyle thou wakest thus, I may not slepe,
For, sestow, al, y-dreynt my smale sherte
With bitter teres from thy swete yën sterte.”*

This seyde, he passeth, and his moder dere,
For verray rewthe that renneth in her herte,
Nil wepe no more, but stinteth everich tere.

OUT OF HEARING

No need to hush the children for her sake,
Or fear their play :
She will not wake, mavrone, she will not
wake.

'Tis the long sleep, the deep long sleep she'll
take,

Betide what may.

No need to hush the children for her sake ;
Even if their glee could yet again outbreak
So loud and gay,
She will not wake, mavrone, she will not
wake.

But sorrow a thought have they of merry-make
This many a day :

No need to hush the children. For her sake
So still they bide and sad, her heart would
ache

At their dismay.

OUT OF HEARING

She will not wake, mavrone, she will not wake
To bid them laugh, and if some angel spake
Small heed they'd pay.

No need to hush the children for her sake :
She will not wake, mavrone, she will not
wake.

ON LISNADARA

ON Lisnadara soft, full soft, falls sleep
Ere dreams begin,
When down the fading hills slow shadows creep
To shut them in,
With all their fields enfolden, hushed and stilled
From steep to steep,
Whose secret, till the east shine amber-silled,
Grey mists shall keep.

For blithe the morn with flower of flame
would break,
And radiance spilled,
That round a shimmering shore flushed all the
lake
Rose-red, and filled
The glen with latticed lights, while strange
soothsay
The breezes spake :

ON LISNADARA

How sure our morrow young as yesterday
Should yonder wake,
And, kindling crystal-clear across the dew
A wonder-way,
Lead forth thereon old joyance wrought anew
In faëry ray.
Nor need a whit to fear when dusk bereaves
Of form and hue
The drowsy world, and builds dim walls and
eaves
Our sight to mew,
Bound with most gentle spell, whose magic
shed
White slumber weaves,
Careless as laps a feather-fended head
Among close leaves.

Yet if the years at last teach bitter lore
In sweet joy's stead,
Each glad hour grown a pearl, with grudging
sore
Slipped from the thread ;

ON LISNADARA

Yea, when long slopes of fiery-fronded fern
 Thrill to heart's core
Grief for the day whose embers withering burn
 To bloom no more ;
And footsteps, strayed on lonely paths afar,
 No more shall turn,
Beyond the faint blue heights that hope debar
 And patience spurn ;
And streams, sped by with many a chiming
 leap,
 But silence mar,
Where listeners fain would hear athwart night's
 deep
 Some echoing star—
So wild the cry that answer ne'er hath won
 From Fate's stern keep :
Yet, yet a peace shall be indeed begun
 With shadows' sweep,
And rest for hearts worn wearier than to weep
 Bring set of sun ;
For soft on Lisnadara, soft falls sleep,
 When dreams are done.

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